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Present Policies Cited

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 25 — Administration officials explained today that for several years the United States has provided the North Atlantic Treaty Organization with nuclear weapons.

The custody and control over these weapons, however, remains with the United States, with the President ultimately responsible for turning over the weapons to NATO allies for use in a war.

On this point, the policy of the Administration and the preceding Eisenhower Administration differs from that of Senator Barry Goldwater, who is suggesting that political control over the weapons should be vested in NATO.

Under the present policy, atomic weapons designated for use by NATO forces are stationed in most of the Allied countries. The principal exception is France, which has refused to permit the "NATO stockpiles" to be placed on her territory unless she has control over the use of the weapons.

In some cases, the weapons, all of tactical rather than strategic size, are in storage dumps guarded by American personnel. In other cases, the warheads are mounted on the allied planes or missiles that would deliver them in event of war.

Through physical custody of electronic means, however, the United States maintains custody and control over the weapons. Partly because of concern that effective custody was not being maintained over some weapons, especially those already mounted on the weapons delivery systems, the United States has taken steps in recent years to tighten its control over the weapons through electronic means.

Thus, atomic warheads in planes or missiles of NATO allies can not be activated until certain electronic signals have been transmitted by the American custodians. The custodians, in turn, cannot turn over control of the weapons for actual use until permission has been granted by the President through the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe.

Ever since the secrecy provisions of the Atomic Energy Law were relaxed in 1958 to permit creation of the "NATO stockpile," the United States has been providing most of the allies on a bilateral basis with information about the size and use of the weapons, but not about their nuclear design. The purpose was to permit the allies to modify their planes and missiles to carry the weapons and to train their crews in their combat use.

The United States recently entered into a similar information exchange agreement with NATO, corresponding to those already in effect with individual allies. The objective is to improve the exchange of information with the NATO alliance for planning and use of the weapons.

Periodically there have been suggestions from some military officials and Defense and State Department officials that actual control of the weapons should be turned over to NATO. These suggestions, however, have always run into resistance at higher Administration levels largely because of the objections of the Joint Congressional Committee on Atomic Energy that such a step would promote a diffusion of nuclear powers.

The Administration has taken another step in this direction with its proposal to create a multilateral force of NATO surface ships equipped with atomic armed Polaris missiles supplied by the United States. One of the ticklish and still unresolved questions is whether control over the weapons would be turned over the NATO force, as seemed to be contemplated in the original proposal of the Kennedy Administration. Largely because of skepticism on this point within the Atomic Energy Commission and the Joint Congressional Committee, the proposal has had slow going within the Administration.

The Central Intelligence Agency comments on Vietnam, mentioned by Mr Goldwater, were written last February and were only a small part of a 45-page report on world conditions, it was disclosed here.

The Republican candidate suggested that the study might have been the forerunner of an Administration announcement soon of a "negotiated peace" in Vietnam, but it was learned that Willard Matthias had prepared his paper Feb. 19. Although the revised draft, which found its way to the newspapers, was dated June 9, it was understood on high authority that the revisions did not touch upon the Vietnam section but dealt with other matters.

The controversial sentence on Vietnam, which was said by the Administration to reflect only Mr. Matthias's views, reads as follows:

"There is also a chance that political evolution within the country [Vietnam] and developments upon the world scene could lead to some kind of negotiated settlement based upon neutralization."

Administration officials contended that this wording was "very far" from being a recommendation for a negotiated peace.

Mr. Matthias's comments on Vietnam accounted for 17 typewritten lines on Pages 36 and 37 of the document, and were a part of his review of specific Asian situations.

The paragraph following his remarks on Vietnam said that "larger stakes" were involved in the Indonesian - Malaysian confrontation because President Sukarno feared that Malaysia might emerge as a power threatening the Indonesian sway in the region.

The main thrust of Mr. Matthias's paper was a discussion of the relative strategic power positions of the United States and the Soviet Union, and the emergence of power centers in smaller states.

No policy recommendations were offered by Mr. Matthias on any subject he discussed in his study.